



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Partnership between DEQ, EPA and city puts emphasis on environmental issues in New Orleans East

BATON ROUGE – A multi-agency operation in the New Orleans area has led to two warrants for arrests. On Monday and Tuesday, DEQ partnered with EPA and the city of New Orleans and inspected nearly 40 sites along the Almonaster corridor in New Orleans East. These facilities were targeted because previous inspections showed they were the most egregious offenders for not complying with environmental regulations.

DEQ Criminal Investigation Division obtained warrants for Cecil Person, 46, of New Orleans, and Floyd Person, 53, of Baton Rouge, for the illegal disposal of solid waste. If convicted, they face possible imprisonment of not more than one year and a criminal penalty of \$25,000 per violation and/or both. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division worked alongside DEQ's Criminal Investigation Division to conduct surveillance of this area.

As in previous operations, DEQ brought in staff from across the state to conduct multi-media inspections at these facilities. The city of New Orleans provided police, sanitation, health and code inspectors, and other essential personnel during the event. Deputies from Sheriff Marlin Gusman's office accompanied DEQ's inspectors. DEQ also partnered with the New Orleans Fire Department, City of New Orleans Revenue Department and the City of New Orleans and Mosquito and Termite Control Board.

The agencies worked together to document areas of concern that involved solid waste, hazardous waste, water quality and asbestos issues in a part of New Orleans that has long been a notorious illegal dumping area. In June of 2009, Jesse Murphy Jr., the owner of Southern Waste Systems of Louisiana, was sentenced to pay a criminal fine of \$25,000, plus court costs and an additional \$12,000 in costs of investigation and prosecution illegal disposal of solid waste at an unpermitted location in New Orleans East. In November of 2009, Charlie Hampton and Hamp's Construction each pled guilty in Orleans Criminal District Court to negligent violations of the Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System statutes for illegally disposing solid waste in a New Orleans East wetland. Charlie Hampton and Hamp's Construction were ordered to pay a criminal fine of \$17,000, plus \$8,000 in investigation and prosecution costs.

"This is a continuation of our effort to curtail illegal dumping and put an end to environmental crimes in the Almonaster-Old Gentilly area," said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. "This event marks our most concentrated effort with the assistance from the city, EPA and others. This area has been an illegal dumping ground for decades and it will take time to end the blight. We have made arrests, levied fines and continue to work together to see progress with area clean ups."

"The Intracoastal Waterway is a vital, national treasure that must be protected in order to preserve habitat for fish and wildlife and to reduce the threat of flood damage," said Ivan Vikin, Special Agent in Charge of EPA's Office of Criminal Enforcement for the Louisiana region. "Further, the targeted areas in New Orleans have been identified as Environmental Justice communities, whose residents are among the least able to fight corporate

pollution and illegal dumping of hazardous wastes. This operation demonstrates that those who put human health and the environment at risk will be prosecuted.”

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is to protect the environment and public health. Any persons with knowledge of any spills, releases, odors, fish kills, open burning, waste tires and any other types of environmental incidents may contact the department at 225-219-3640 or Toll Free 1-888-763-5424.

“The Department is dedicated to create an atmosphere where people are less inclined to illegally dump or conduct environmental crimes.” Said DEQ Operation Commander and Southeast Regional Office Manager Mike Algero. “When people get arrested, when they have to pay larger fines and when agencies can work together like we have this week, then we can curtail promiscuous dumping.”

Photos will be available at the DEQ Web site, www.deq.louisiana.gov.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case and all subjects are presumed innocent. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.

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